

Executive Summary

I. Introduction

The evaluation focuses on projects implemented by the Friends of Tibet (Amis du Tibet - AT) and co-funded by the Luxembourg Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs (ministère des Affaires étrangères et européennes - MAEE) from April 2012 to July 2016. The organisation Friends of Tibet has been recognised as fulfilling the criteria governing accreditation as a non-governmental organization (NGO) by the MAEE since 1996.

Friends of Tibet was founded in Luxembourg on June 7, 1995. Its mission is *“to support and help the Tibetan people in their efforts to survive, to preserve their **cultural and religious identity** and to assert its right to **self-determination**; by peaceful means to work towards attaining the respect for **Human Rights** of the Tibetan people; to raise public awareness regarding the urgent need to **safeguard and restore the cultural and ecological heritage of Tibet**”; and finally, “to initiate and support **cooperative development projects in line with its social objectives.**”*

Under the terms of reference issued by the MAEE, the overall objective of this evaluation is to review the decision-making and management mechanisms of AT, in light of a specific programme, to safeguard its ability to ensure an effective and efficient implementation of development projects, as well as to ensure the value and extent of its contributions in the fight against poverty and for sustainable development. The assignment was divided into three components:

- A structural audit in order to assess how AT is organised to manage its projects (part 1);
- A sample review of four projects representing the NGO's activities in India (part 2);
- An evaluation of the strategic and operational approach of AT (part 3).

Nr	Project title	Local partner
01	Construction of a building for the elderly in Dharamsala	Tibetan Children's Villages (TCV)
02	Graduate Funding for young Tibetans through loans	
03	Training Project entrepreneurship for young Tibetan	Social and Resource Development Fund (SARD)
04	Project screening for hepatitis B among Tibetan populations	

A steering committee (Comité de Pilotage - COPIL) was formed to coordinate the various phases of the evaluation. The committee brought together representatives of MAEE's directorate for development cooperation and humanitarian action, representatives of TA's Administration Council (Conseil d'Administration - CA) and the evaluators:

- The objective of the first COPIL was to determine the sample of projects to be reviewed and agree on dates for the field visits;
- The second COPIL was organized in order to facilitate an exchange of findings following the field visits. On this occasion, the evaluators presented their key findings of the

structural and organisational audit (part 1) and a more in-depth report regarding the results of their visits (part 2);

- During the third COPIL the evaluators presented their findings, followed by a discussion and the joint finalisation of recommendations.

II. Conclusions

1. *Regarding the organisational capacity of the NGO.*

- AT is still a relatively modest-size NGO. It was not until 2010 that it was able to open an office in Luxembourg. To a large extent its activities still depend on the mobilisation and commitment of its volunteers. There is only one paid employee, hired last year.
- The restructuring and expansion in 2013 of its Board of Directors helped initiate a renewal process within the NGO, promoting better governance, consistency and transparency of all its actions, and a more qualitative approach better adapted to the new challenges of development cooperation. Four Working Groups and ad hoc Groups (WG) have reinforced this process.
- Due to the specific nature of its field of intervention, the organisation's funding opportunities are rather limited compared to other social actors in Luxembourg. Its dependence on the MAEE, around 62%, is still high. However, AT has recently demonstrated its willingness to overcome this dependence by strengthening and diversifying its funding efforts, soliciting the support of municipalities, companies and private donors.
- The organisation is not sufficiently proactive in defining and selecting projects. Its approach is more traditional: selecting them from a range of opportunities offered by its Southern partners. In addition, the organisation doesn't foresee any measures to prevent or guard against risk, which could damage its effectiveness and efficiency.
- AT has neither the financial nor the human resources to provide technical guidance and training on the project intervention areas it co-finances.
- The Board of Directors is aware of the obstacles to adapting the institutional policy to the new challenges of development cooperation. However, AT hasn't yet managed to formulate a comprehensive and coherent strategy that maximises its contribution to sustainable development at the operational level. The institutional renewal, while still on-going, is an opportunity to advance the decision-making process.

2. *Regarding the technical and sectoral level, and partnership processes in the South*

- Most volunteers are teachers who can therefore offer some expertise in the field of education; one of AT's preferred intervention sectors.
- Regarding the construction of buildings, contractual agreements were made with an architectural firm to ensure periodic visits to worksites. In the case of the Old People's Home, project supervision was reinforced by the visit of a Belgian engineer from Engineers Without Borders. This hybrid approach however could not overcome weaknesses in the project design. The organisation decided to move in the direction of sectoral interventions (education, health and vocational training) and to abandon those related to infrastructure construction.

- The collaboration between AT and its southern partners, of which TCV is the most important, is essentially financial in nature. There is no added value in terms of capacity building of operational mechanisms, Project Cycle Management (PCM), or fundraising.
- Partnerships between AT and its southern partners are established on the basis of the development and signing of formal agreements, in which the obligations of each stakeholder are identified. However, these documents still lack precision and, above all, are hampered by the absence of the latest project documents and logical framework, which should be translated into English and attached to the contract.
- AT's interventions are highly relevant as they address the priorities of the target populations, whether in the field of health, education, vocational training (capacity building) or the wellbeing of elderly people. Cross-cutting issues such as gender and sustainability have been taken into account by all stakeholders. The sustainability of partnership agreements between AT and CVT has enabled the latter to pursue and consolidate its long-term sectoral policy of universal primary and secondary quality education for all Tibetan children in the region.
- AT has managed to identify key partners - TCV and some departments of the government in exile - each counting on extensive experience, be it in education, vocational training, maternal and child health, disease prevention, etc., guaranteeing a quality technical intervention.
- Support of AT in terms of strengthening the capacity of its Southern partners, guidance and expertise, as well as project monitoring and M&E is clearly insufficient. The organisation also faces difficulties identifying its partners' training needs.
- Insufficient communication between TA and its local partners is one of the problems identified during the field mission. Communications between AT and its partners are too brief. On-site interviews are too short and are not followed up by a rendering or restitution of the preliminary results of field visits. The TCV, SARD and the Ministry of Health of the Tibetan Government in exile do not have an English copy of the draft document and logical framework submitted to the MAEE. This has led to confusion and a number of misunderstandings between the partners.
- Use of the logical framework is not part of the culture of local partners in charge of monitoring operational activities.
- Progress reports (narrative and financial) submitted by certain partners, including SARD, are irregular, of rather poor quality and do not follow a standardised format.

3. Added value for Luxembourgish civil society and Cooperation

It is important to note that AT is one of the few NGOs in Europe that supports the Tibetan diaspora in India and other countries in the region. This is actually a courageous political decision, given China's diplomatic weight at the international level and the special status in India of the Tibetan population. The Tibetan cause can benefit greatly from international financial assistance, especially multilateral cooperation. For the MAEE, AT constitutes the only window on the Tibetan universe, where heritage issues, both cultural and in terms of human rights are intertwined with those of equitable sustainable development.

The projects funded by AT fit perfectly into the main guidelines of Luxembourg's MAEE, namely the fight against poverty, improving living conditions of the most vulnerable populations of Tibetan origins - women, children and elderly persons - and equal chances and opportunities in access to education, to higher education and the labour market. More recently, AT's interventions have helped institutionalise mechanisms set up by the Tibetan community in exile (SARD, health system of the Tibetan government in exile, etc.) to ensure its survival.

Part of the organisation's interventions aim to educate and inform the resident population in Luxembourg regarding threats to the respect of fundamental rights of the Tibetan communities in occupied Tibet or their land of exile. Raising awareness and appreciation of the rich cultural heritage, tangible and intangible, of Tibet is part of AT's mission.

III. Recommendations

1. Regarding the organisational capacity of the NGO

- It is imperative for the organisation to more clearly define its policy and institutional strategy, in terms of geographical and sectoral priorities and to define, on this basis, its strategic planning.
- If the organisation wants to have the ability to evolve and adapt to the challenges posed by contextual issues at the macro and micro level, it must develop the right methodologies and use relevant tools to optimise the quality of its actions, both regarding the coherence of its missions, as well as its institutional vision.
- A process of professionalization of its employee and volunteers should be considered in order to meet the requirements of international donors. The evaluation has uncovered substantial deficiencies in the managing and monitoring of projects. Increased knowledge of management, monitoring and reporting tools is essential, along with greater transparency and accountability vis-à-vis its southern partners (systematic presentation of project documents in English, joint preparation of programme field visits, and formalised feedback (restitution) of preliminary observations). Furthermore, project formulation requires a mastery of national and sectoral policy documents, as well as the Five Year Plan of the host country.

2. Regarding the technical and sectoral level and modalities of partnerships in the South

- Training in Project Cycle Management (PCM) and other follow-up and M&E tools should be organised to strengthen the skills of the actors, both North and South.
- Provide the southern partners with training tools in regional languages (Hindi and English).
- Develop a project-tracking sheet using the methodology of the logical framework and introduce SMART indicators and the use of report templates;
- Increase the frequency of reports of partners on the ground to quarterly reports.
- Inform partners in the South of the big post-Millennium Development Goal (MDG) strategic directions of international cooperation and introduce them to the key players in the bilateral and multilateral cooperation in order to assist them in their fundraising efforts.

- Disseminate information to local partners about the new tax allowances by the Indian government to businesses that support development projects.
- Promote experience sharing and provide greater visibility to innovative interventions of Southern partners.
- Invest in new fields of professional activities like the green economy and sustainable and cultural tourism.
- Undertake advocacy and vocational training and develop a local plan of participatory sustainable development to protect and enhance the local natural and cultural heritage in order to promote sustainable tourism, a source of quality jobs for the younger generation of Tibetans.

3. The added value for the Luxembourgish civil society and Cooperation.

As mentioned earlier, Friends of Tibet's interventions are aimed at a very vulnerable population, not only politically and economically, but also regarding the respect and safeguarding of their cultural, linguistic, historical and religious community, which is not well known to the Luxembourgish public and insufficiently supported by international cooperation and donors. Greater efforts must be expended to harness the feedback and information garnered from the field, and to disseminate information via digital media accessible to all. Regarding sustainability, Friends of Tibet should think about ways to formalise and institutionalise its experience and best practices.